THINK OUT YOUR FAITH

PHILIP MERCER
RHINELANDER

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THINK OUT YOUR FAITH

THE FAITH OF THE CROSS

BEING THE BISHOP PADDOCK LECTURES DELIVERED
AT THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,
NEW YORK, IN FEBRUARY, 1914

BY

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Second Impression

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IN LOVING MEMORY

OF

WALDEN MYER

CANON OF WASHINGTON CATHEDRAL

WHOSE LOYAL FRIENDSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING SYMPATHY

FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS

HAVE BEEN A CONSTANT

ENCOURAGEMENT

AND STIMULUS

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PREFACE

I

IN this small book are gathered six papers and addresses written or delivered in the last few years at various times and under no less varying circumstances. Yet all are closely joined, if not in exact logical sequence, at least in subject matter and in form of treatment. Here and there are repetitions. But none the less I think each of the six adds something to the other five, either by expanding what is elsewhere only lightly touched, or by laying foundations on which subsequent arguments may more securely rest. I say "subsequent," for, as far as possible, the papers are printed in progressive order.

II

If apology is needed for putting into permanent form such small attempts to elucidate great questions, I would fall back with some con-

fidence on the many friends who have seen something of enduring value in what is here set down. It also appears certainly true that the place and value of the Christian creed in and for the Christian life, is not a question safely left to scholars and philosophers. It vitally concerns every one who wants to be a Christian. It is intensely practical. Until its right solution has been found, no secure progress in discipleship can possibly be made. For the Church's creed embodies, not the doubtful and ephemeral ideas of individual philosophers and theologians, but the central and cardinal convictions of the believing body as a whole. In every phrase and sentence of its creed, the age-long Christian fellowship of faith is to be heard calling across time and space to those who, as yet either unborn or unbelieving, are not included in its membership. Thus to throw light on the nature and meaning of this challenge of the creed is to do a real work in the simple propagation of the Gospel.

III

One more word in comment on the title of this book. I have cast the title in sentence form and have employed the second person. And this with a purpose and a hope. If the title is to be taken as much less than an imperative command, on the other hand it implies much more than an amiable suggestion. It is meant to imply a personal and a pastoral relation between the reader and the writer. The contents of this book are not mere private thoughts, cast out on the current of religious literature to take their chance. They had birth under pressure of pastoral responsibility. They were written, not only to meet definite occasions, but also to help and guide definite groups of men and women whom it was my privilege to serve: who had the right to look to me for help and guidance. For me this makes this book, small as it is, weighty with dear associations. And my chief satisfaction in its publication comes from the vivid memories which it recalls of my episcopate in Pennsylvania, and of my fellow-workers, friends and patient hearers there. They at least will

understand my keen desire to retain the pastoral note in what is here reiterated chiefly for their sake. I would still be a helper of their faith and a sharer of their joy and peace in believing. I would still feel, as in former days, that we are thinking out our common faith together.

PHILIP M. RHINELANDER.

S. Bartholomew's Day, 1926.
WASHINGTON, D. C.,

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THINK OUT YOUR FAITH

I

THEOLOGY AND EDUCATION*

I

I WOULD begin with a very simple parable. I would suggest for meditation an organist, seated on his bench, with the stops and keys before him, and the bellows working. Just what happens when he plays? Well, the organist seems to disappear, brushed clean away and swallowed up by the spirit of music awake and become vocal. The melodies, the interwoven harmonies, the swell and fall, the varying tones and qualities of sound, are there in their own right, by their own laws. No doubt the little man with his little hands and

* Paper read at the one hundredth anniversary of the General Theological Seminary, on May 1, 1919, and subsequently printed in *The American Church Monthly*.

feet has raised the curtain, has played the part of call-boy, but all the rest is music. The organist has disappeared.

And yet, if he has disappeared, it is by his own act, or rather by his own art. Let him make a misstep upon his pedals or a slip by the smallest of his fingers, and he will come back upon you in his native and naked personality. There is no clearer instance of absolute and momentary control than that of an organ by an organist. It is a miracle of scientific and mechanical adjustment. Of ten thousand melodies, stored up in mind, or filed in manuscript, he has selected one. Of innumerable combinations of notes and tones he has chosen out his own. In the richest and loudest burst of music only a few pipes speak. The great majority are silent. A few pounds of pressure, rightly distributed through a space of fifteen minutes, applied by the half ounce, now here, now there, will evoke (or shall we say *educe?*) a hero's dead march or an angel's song. But the hero would not have been carried to his grave, nor the angel sung his song, unless the organist had moved the stops and pressed the keys.

II

That is the parable. I freely admit its imperfections. And later I will come back to show just where it fails. But it will serve to point one truth, entirely self-evident, and yet usually overlooked and not seldom voluminously and vehemently denied, namely, that education is in the very nature of the case *dogmatic.* The sounds and notes are doubtless latent in the child. He must produce them. But there is always an organist or educator, who pulls or pushes as he wills.

A colossal and convincing illustration is found in the Kaiser and the German people. Take the Kaiser, if you like, not as by Divine right a veritable music-master, but as merely an automatic organ-player. Figure the twenty army corps commanders and the battalions of subservient professors, as the composers of the melody and the writers of the score. Granted that they steered his hands and feet to the proper keys and pedals, arranged the crescendos and diminuendos, and set all the combinations; still the thing is clear, past the shadow of a question, that one man played upon a people's

soul and the 65,000,000 of them poured forth in answer their self-devoted and self-destructive chorus: "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles!"

The thing is so terrifically plain and evident, and it has taken place on such a portentous scale, that a great mass of very modern pedagogy has been thrown into the scrap-heap overnight and a great many modern pedagogues are seeking cover. For one cannot any longer talk about the free and uninfluenced shooting forth of the innate ideas of children and get away with it. For all time the world, even the thoughtless world, will have before its eyes the great classical illustration of all history, of what education really is and to what extraordinary perfection its process can be brought.

III

My first point then is that education is dogmatic, in the very nature of the case. And I use the word deliberately in view of what is to follow later on in this discussion. In any case it is as good as any other word and perhaps better. For a dogma is nothing in the world

but an idea sufficiently clear in the mind to be defined, and sufficiently attractive to the heart to incite to propaganda. Dogma has no necessary religious connotation. A cook-book or a Liberty Loan circular is fairly teeming with it. Given an idea of any sort in actual process of transmission from mind to mind, and there is dogma at its work of education. There is no education otherwise. So far we can press our parable quite fearlessly. The parents in the home, the nursery toys, the pictures on the walls, the posters on the hoardings, are indeed educational, but they are educational simply because they are dogmatic. Some one has provided and prepared them: some one is pressing certain keys and pulling certain stops.

In passing, let me point out another truth which springs immediately out of this and drives it home. Strictly speaking there are no *uneducated* people. Everyone really receives an equal amount of education. Those who can neither read nor write may be as much *educated*, though in a different way and along a different line, as those who are thoroughly at home in fifty languages and literatures. What

our common way of talking about this matter really means is that we have established certain standards: certain things which we have agreed to call right or wrong, cultured or barbarous. These are the *dogmas* which we have determined to "put over" on the children; which are to evoke the harmonies or discords in the children's lives. It may be pacifist dogma which will have no soldiers in the nursery. It may be "liberal" dogma which, among other things, fervently believes that religious agnosticism is the proper and profitable spiritual state. In small groups or in large groups, the inevitable process is kept working. No one escapes or can escape from it. Everybody is always educating and being educated. And in this as in other cases the first are often last, and the last first. Fagin, the Jew in Dickens' story, is as notable and efficient an educator as is President Butler of Columbia. Our streets are probably our most effective public schools.

IV

So far the parable of organist and organ. But now it fails us. For the organ will have to be a magic organ if we are to use it to repre-

sent a child. It must have the power to multiply itself, to put forth new pipes and reeds of unimagined kind and quality. It must be able to keep on playing by itself and to make its own melodies and harmonies. It will not be altogether free. Always, or nearly always, it will be following out the impulse of the master who first drew sounds from it. Never, or scarcely ever, will it discover or recover the use of the notes and tones which he left silent. Always there will be some original capacity unused and useless. But still it will be miraculously self-determining and self-determined. For that is the reality of which the organist and organ are the type; that is the child, as he receives and completes his education.

And just here is where theology comes in. It is really very simple. Neither dreams, nor fears, nor ghosts have made men theologians, but just the mysteries of their own self-conscious life. Theology is nothing but philosophy trying to do justice, not to some fragments, but to the whole of our experience. It is simply our true and brave insistence that there are answers to our deepest questions; that there is a key to the understanding even of the

human heart. Faith in God is not, strictly speaking, the same thing as faith in man. But one can't possibly have the last without the first. For God alone makes valid man's experience. Without God, men do not know at all who they are, or where they are, or what that should be at. That is why men seek after God, that they may believe in Him and therefore in themselves.

Now quite clearly what happens to and in the child when he takes himself into his own hands, and voluntarily acts and reacts for or against the impulses which have been given him, will depend upon his philosophy of life. Again I deliberately use a long word because I want to rob it of its terrors and show it as a perfectly simple and every-day affair. A philosopher is simply one who views his own life as a whole. Everyone does that. Everybody has to do it. So everyone is a philosopher. We are not all the time in philosophic mood. A pregnant moment, an absorbing task, a keen emotion while it lasts, robs us of our philosophy. We live much of the time from hand to mouth; on trains and trolleys, in books and theatres. Life is one thing after another.

And yet it is all bound together with a dominating purpose, by a single will, towards a *summum bonum*. "No man can serve two masters." There may be breaks away from the main track. There may be pauses in back waters, sometimes even a stroke or two pulled against the current (as in *Dear Brutus*). But each is ruled by his philosophy; by his whole view of his whole life.

And if God is not at work in our philosophy, then the God-like part of our nature will have no stimulus, will not be roused, will count for nothing. It will be a stop which has never been pulled out; a note which never has been sounded. I believe it is true that the hunting instinct of some breeds of dogs will die out of them if for a certain space after their birth they are kept from any use of it. And those who have patiently amassed the facts tell us the same story about children's capacity for faith in God. If the religious instinct is left dormant up to the thirteenth or fourteenth year it is almost always permanently lost. How singularly blind, how scientifically fatuous, how intellectually self-deceived are they who make pretense of leaving it to children

(their own or other people's) to decide whether they will believe in God or no! Truly a child may give up his theology even after he has been taught it, just as he may give up music after he has made painful acquaintance with the scales, or Greek after he has read a book of Xenophon, or Hebrew after he has gone through six chapters out of Genesis. But, just as he could never have learned to use even the English language unless some one had taught it to him, so he can never come to believe in God unless some one *dogmatically* tells him to.

V

Now we have the word in its right context. Now we are at grips with the real question, with the real difficulty. But even so, I doubt if we all see quite clearly where the difficulty lies. All education is and must be dogmatic. Medicine, law, football, dress and dancing; in every possible department, some one must do the pushing and the pulling if there is to be any education. In other fields and subjects there is no sort of doubt or hesitation. But

in religion; in the life with God; in the laws which control our commerce with the spiritual world; dogmas are "taboo"! And we talk very seriously and very earnestly about the great ideal of educating people in religion without teaching them theology. And what we say is utter nonsense. We see the nonsense of it if we stop to think. But do we see the reason for the nonsense? Do we realize why we are willing to stultify ourselves and to use words wholly without meaning?

In the last analysis I believe Mr. Chesterton is right in saying that what inhibits us is *fear*. "Most modern freedom," he writes, "is at root fear. It is not so much that we are too bold to endure rules;' it is rather that we are too timid to endure responsibility, especially the responsibility of affirming the truth of our human tradition and handing it on with an unshaken voice. That is 'the one eternal education: to be sure enough that something is true that you dare to tell it to a child. From this high audacious duty the moderns are fleeing on every side and the only excuse for them is that their modern philosophies are so half-baked and hypothetical that they

cannot convince themselves enough to convince even a new-born babe." *

So far Mr. Chesterton. I think he puts his finger on the spot. I think what inhibits us is fear; the rest is "camouflage"; scenic display, elaborate designs, intricate word-painting to cover up the ugly fact of moral weakness, of hesitating will. Grounding on this, Chesterton goes on: "The educationist must find a creed and teach it. Out of all the throng of theories he must somehow select a theory. Out of all the thundering voices he must manage to hear a voice. Out of all the awful and aching battle of blinding lights, without one shadow to give shape to them, he must manage to trace and to track a star."† That is sonorous writing, but it is very near to simple common sense.

For us who believe in, and would foster, Christian education; who with open eyes and ready wills understand that this can be accomplished only by dogmatically teaching Christianity; there is one way and no other for us

* G. K. Chesterton "What's Wrong with the World" (New York, 1910), p. 254.

† Ibid. p. 276.

to walk in; one thing and no other for us to do. We must find a Christian creed and teach it. And there is only one creed for us to find, one which we have already found; or rather, which, by God's mercy, has found us; the Creed of the Church Catholic. It and it alone enshrines the truth of our human tradition; it and it alone conserves the whole spiritual capital of our race; the sum of secure apprehension of spiritual things which under God the family of men has gained. It is the very charter of the soul's liberty in the presence of, and by the power of its God.

VI

It is becoming increasingly clear,—in the light of the most sure results of scholarship, and especially in these great latter days of soul-searching spiritual strain—that the question we were so fond of asking in the days before the war, "What is Christianity?" is one of the easiest and straightest questions in the world to answer, provided we really want to get the answer and are not seeking to start a new "home-made" religion under the patronage of our Blessed Lord. The Apostolic

Creed buttressed by the Apostolic record; the Apostolic Sacraments secured by the Apostolic Ministry; it is one coherent whole; tested, beaten out, compact together, native everywhere, sufficient always; regenerating sinners, sanctifying saints, setting free the intellect, giving to all human arts a new and thrilling soul and purpose; moulding the social order; guarding the home; reconciling classes; knitting the nations; dignifying, vitalizing, fructifying human life on every level, in every corner, under every circumstance. It is our great democratic spiritual heritage. It is God in His Son and through His Spirit making His whole creation vocal in His praise.

There lies our work. But if we are to do it we must be resolute. We must give up our compromising. We must shirk no sacrifice nor labor. We must close up our ranks. We must have a common mind. I do not overlook the difficulties. After much drifting it is not always easy to find the proper anchorage, nor even to recognize it after it is found. After centuries of divided counsels and rank crops of private fantasies and fancies, it will take no little patience, wisdom and courage

to draw the line quite clearly between preference and principle, to be "first pure and then peaceable." Indeed the really effective prosecution of our task must wait on the reunion of the Churches. Community of mind is, after all, not the condition precedent, but the sure and blessed consequent, of community in prayer, and above all, in worship.

Yet there is much more to do than watchful waiting. We can at least get to the heart of our problem, even if our reach falls far short of the extremities. Fr. Waggett, I think, it is who reminds us that the true analogue of the Church Catholic is not a field fenced in, so that everybody is definitely on the inside or the outside: but rather a blazing sun lighting a universe. Looking ahead along its rays it may puzzle you to know where light ends and dark begins; but there is no doubt whatever about the sun, where it is and what it is.

VII

And this is my last word. I have played rather loosely with my assigned subject. I have read the banns, rather than solemnized the marriage, between Education and Theol-

ogy. But I know how and by Whom their union is indissolubly made and fertilized unto eternal life, namely, by the Holy Spirit. Our theology must be all built up, verified, unified and vitalized in and by Him; our education must be based on faith in His regenerating, illuminating, and reproductive power.

It is simply true that one does not arrive at Christianity until one has received the Holy Ghost; that the only really logical and defensible definition of a Christian is just this—one who has received Him. The whole business of really Catholic theology is to set this forth, to press it home, to give the ways and means by which this supernatural Presence and Companionship may be established and maintained; to make His call to fellowship seem as persuasive, as sweetly reasonable, as it is. And similarly the whole business of Catholic education is to keep the child within the circle of His stimulating influence; to see that all doors are open for His entrance; that every latent faculty of godly faith and fear and of human helpfulness may be touched into life, unrolled, developed, brought to full fruition by the light which is the life of men.

At the hundredth anniversary of this School of Theologians, in the midst of men of mature and well-furnished minds, I have been talking almost wholly about children. Indeed I have had my heart and mind deliberately set on the mystery and magic of an infant class. And my plea in self-defense is, not simply that we have all been children, nor even that we all have, or shall have, children, few or many, under our spiritual guidance. But rather that the laboratory, both of education and theology, is in the spirit of a very little child; that if we now or later, in this world or the next, are to be theologically sound and thoroughly well educated, we, before it is too late, must become as little children.

II

CREEDS AND CHRISTIANITY *

WHAT is the true place of a creed in a religion: of *any* creed in *any* religion? In particular, what is the place and part of the Christian creed in the Christian religion? In itself that is a question of great interest, well worth our careful thought. It is one of the burning questions of the day. It is also a question of vital and practical importance. I should like to take for granted that my readers want to be Christians, and want to be better Christians than they are. If so, this question of the creed will have a direct bearing on their personal religion, on their personal attachment to their Lord. I want them therefore to give this inquiry a personal, and individual note: to ask themselves, "What am I as a Christian to do or to think about the creed? Ought I to hold to it?

* A summary of Lenten lectures in Bethlehem Chapel, Washington Cathedral; 1925.

Ought I to let it go? And if so, why? What is its real and rightful place in my religion?" So interrogating themselves, my readers may get out of this discussion, not only mental stimulus, but also, what is vastly more important, spiritual help and satisfaction: a growth in faith and grace.

I

My purpose is to treat this question as simply and practically as I can, seeking to give a right direction to your thought, leaving details to be worked out by you at your leisure. At the start, a concrete illustration may be of help. Think of a journey you have made from one place to another: say, from Washington to Baltimore. You can split up that journey, so to speak, into three parts or stages. Three things went to make it up. First, there was your *desire* to go. Nothing would have happened without that. For one reason or another, you wanted to go to Baltimore. That is where it all began. Next came the *means of transportation* which you used. You had to find some way of getting there. Desires, however strong, are not enough to carry

anyone on any journey to any goal. To make a journey you must have a means of transit. So you took a motor or a train, and went upon your way. That was the second step. Lastly, came the *arrival:* the getting there: the reaching of your goal. That was the great point: that completed the whole thing: that meant the fulfillment of your original desire. The journey was accomplished.

Now religion is like a journey: indeed it may be well thought of and defined as the journey of the soul to God. Like every journey, it has the same three parts or stages: a start, a transit, an arrival. Its start is in desire for God. That is where it all begins. "My soul is athirst for God: yea, even for the Living God. When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" Until, and unless, some such "thirst of soul" comes to us, religion must remain a secret hidden from us, an experience quite outside of our lives. So it starts in a desire. Next, it must find means of transportation: a way of access. Something, someone, is needed to point the way: to give directions: to communicate the needed spiritual motive power which will bring one

where one wants to be, that is, into contact and fellowship with God. Lastly, to crown it and complete it, comes the arrival: some actual reality or experience of communion with the God of one's desire. And the arrival is the chief point, the great thing. My whole religious hope is set on it. My whole religious satisfaction depends on it. Without some confidence or faith that God is not a stranger: that I know Him for what He is: that I have really discovered what He approves and what He disapproves: what He would have me do and leave undone: until I have some definite assurance that my life is in touch with His life, my religious desire leads me nowhere, comes to nothing: has no practical meaning for me, no bearing on my life.

Clearly, fulfillment or arrival is the thing that really matters. Compared with it the means of transportation, the way I took to get to God, seems comparatively unimportant. And so it is, just as means are always subordinate to ends. But none the less the means of access are absolutely necessary. Without them there could be neither journey nor arrival. Without them my religion would end as it

began, in a desire entirely unsatisfied. Means of transit may be subordinate and secondary. But they are essential.

Now that gives a key to the solution of our problem. For creeds are meant to supply us with the means of transportation on our religious journey. In the spiritual sphere they correspond to the trains or motor cars which we take to make our earthly journeys. Creeds, all creeds which have been set forth and believed, have as their real purpose, to give or show to men the way of access into the Presence and Fellowship of God. That may be a rather crude and superficial way of putting it, but it does put us on the track: it starts us thinking in the right way. Creeds are the means of access: they are nothing more and they are nothing less. They are secondary, not primary, in religion. They are the means, not the ends. But they are necessary. Without them there could be no arrival: no realized or practical religion. "O that I knew where I might find Him, that I might even come into His Presence." It is the office of the creed to tell us *where* and *how*.

II

A creed, then, although not the chief part, is still a necessary part, of a religion. It is not the end itself, but it is a necessary means by which the end is gained. Hence it is that every religion is known by its creed. The instant you hear of Judaism, for instance, or Buddhism, or Islam, or Spiritualism, or Mormonism, or Christian Science, you think at once of their respective creeds. Each one has its answer to the soul's question: "How and where may I find God?" It is through the answer which it gives to the religious question "*How?*" that each religion makes its claim on men's attention and allegiance. A religion gets its name and definition from its creed.

Tracing the matter one step farther back, behind each great religious creed lies the influence of a great religious leader. The historical process is quite simple and familiar. It is of course true that the first thing a religious leader has to do is to quicken interest in spiritual things: to make people "attentive to hear the word of God." In the commer-

cial language of our day, he must make a market before he can make sales. Men must desire God before they will care to learn how they may have contact with Him. But the quickening of spiritual interest is not the only, nor the chief, thing which a religious leader has to do. If his work ends with this, then his influence will perish with him and his very name be lost. His permanent success, the measure of his spiritual leadership, is found in his ability, not merely to raise hopes, but to fulfill them: not merely to quicken desire, but to satisfy it. Out of his personal influence on his contemporaries, must come a clear impression, at least in summary form, of what he taught: of what he did: of what he prescribed by way of rules for the soul's guidance and of remedies for the soul's need. Only so can his influence remain a living power. Only because he leaves a creed behind him, does he become a figure in religious history.

Now this is true in the case of Jesus Christ. It applies to Him. For, in any case, whether or not He was much more, He was at least a great religious Leader. More than any other

He had power to stir men's souls. "Never man spake like this Man." So it is said of Him. Multitudes hung upon His words. "The common people heard Him gladly." More than this, He left behind a creed more wonderfully effective than any other creed ever offered to the world. It has dominated the lives of millions of men and women in every age, and class and country. It is extraordinarily consistent with itself, changing in no essential point, through all the Christian centuries. It is as strong to convert and compel the hearts and minds of men to-day as when, through the Apostles, it first was given to the world. And the living influence of Jesus Christ has endured because of the creed which bears His name. It is through the Christian creed that Christ's answer to the soul's question, "How may I find my way into the fellowship of God the Father?" is still vital and dynamic. All Christian devotion given to the Lord: all the love felt for Him: all the great Names given Him by those who have found Him to be Saviour, Lord, Mediator: who have found through Him their access to the Father: all has come out of the creed:

all has been possible through the creed. It has all happened because the creed was there to be believed. Without the creed, Christianity would have become an unmeaning, hopeless impulse: indeed it would never have been more than a fleeting spiritual emotion, rising like a flame and dying into darkness. To give up all creeds means to give up all religion. To give up the Christian creed means to give up the Christian religion: to give up Christ Himself as a religious Leader.

III

So out of our Lord's influence as a religious Leader came a creed which through the ages, down to our own day, has preserved and made available for us His personal and characteristic directions and prescriptions for the "journey of the soul to God." What is the distinctive feature of that creed? There can be no mistake about the answer. The record of history is quite definite and clear. Put quite simply it is this: namely, that at the very beginning, as soon as there was any Christian creed at all, the very heart and core of it was Jesus Christ Himself. From the very first

He was its centre. He Himself was preached as the Gospel which had come through Him, as the creed which had been learned from Him. In other words, He Himself summed up the creed which was given in His Name. Now that is unique in all religious history. It has no parallel. In other religions it was not the *teacher*, but the *teaching*, which went into the creed. In Christianity it worked just the other way. The Teacher, not the teaching, makes the creed. No Mohammedan, no Buddhist, would ever think of saying that Mohammed or Gautama *is* his creed. But that is precisely what the Christian says, and has said from the beginning, about Jesus Christ: "Jesus is Lord: Jesus is Saviour: Jesus forgives sins: Jesus is judge: Jesus gives life: Jesus is all in all." Such expressions come naturally, instinctively from the lips of Christians. They give the root conviction which, from the first, has brought forth all other items of Christian faith as a tree trunk puts forth branches, or as spring flowers ripen into autumn fruit.

I say this was the very essence of the Christian creed when it began: when it took its earliest form: when there was any Christian

creed at all. For we must remember that Christianity began to be taught as a religion when the Apostles began to preach at Pentecost. And this was clearly according to the Lord's intention. He wrote nothing Himself. He set forth no system of dogmatic teaching. He organized no new religious worship. But one thing He did with extraordinary care and patience. He trained twelve men. Their training was the chief concern and effort of His ministry. They were to understand His secret. He was to speak through them. His message to the world was to find outlet and expression through these men whom He had trained. So it all happened just as He had planned. The world first learned the Christian creed through the teaching of the Twelve. And there can be no question that, if you let the impact of that teaching fall fairly on your ears, you will find the new creed which it embodies wholly centred in the Person of the Lord. He is the Gospel. He is the revelation. Nothing at all is there except the Person of Jesus Christ, living, reigning, saving, and having the final prerogative of judgment. God has not waited for man to come to Him.

God has come to man. God has taken the initiative, not sending a prophet but being manifest Himself. To be with Jesus is to be with God. To come to Jesus is to come to God. Coming to Him you reach your journey's end. You have arrived. That is the sum of it.

You will remember that in the Gospel according to St. John you have these words put in Jesus' mouth: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." And also these: "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." These words very fairly represent the burden of all Apostolic teaching. Whether you are listening to Peter, or Paul, or John, or James, or Stephen, or any other Apostolic messenger it is the same. "Come! Believe in Him. Get in touch with Him and your religious problem is forever solved. You will have your answer. To be with Jesus is to be with God." That is the distinctive keynote of the Christian creed. It has no other.

IV

So the Christian creed from the beginning had the Person of Christ as its very core and centre. "There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved": that was the message given to the world by the Apostles. But we must look into this matter a little more carefully. The exact form which the creed took, the precise words employed to make its meaning clear, are of great interest. The Apostles had a difficult problem on their hands. In the Gospel days as "the Lord Jesus went in and out among them," He was day by day making an extraordinary impression on them. More and more He captured and captivated them. More and more they leaned on Him and depended on Him for everything they needed both for soul and body. His mysterious significance made itself felt, held them in thrall, completely dominated them. But it was one thing to feel it and to yield to it in the familiar intercourse of daily life: it was quite another thing to find words to match their feelings: words which would adequately convey to others the

experience which had come to them through contact and fellowship with Jesus Christ. *Practically*, without question, they had given Him the place of God Himself. He had the *value*, the *authority*, of God for them. That is evident on the very surface of the story. But just how were they to put it into words? To say all briefly, the term they came to use, and which the Church has held to ever since, was the term *Incarnation*. "The Word *was made flesh* and dwelt among us." So we read in the Fourth Gospel. That was the phrase adopted: that was the form chosen as best suited to express all that was involved for them in their devotion to, and thought about, their Lord. And the Church took it from the Apostles and enshrined it at the heart of the greatest and most explicit of her creeds: "He was *incarnate* by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and was made man."

To make it clear why they chose this term, and what they meant by it, notice that in using the term *Incarnation* they were rejecting two other alternative terms which might have been employed. First, they refused to *deify a man:* that is, to raise to divine place and honor one

whom they believed to be essentially a man. Now deification of men was very common and very popular in the Apostles' time. There were temples dedicated to these hero-gods. There were pantheons crowded with their images. The Emperor himself demanded and received divine honors. Deification, so to speak, was in the air. Nothing was easier for, or more congenial to, contemporary thought. But it was utterly impossible for the Apostles. For the Apostles were Jews, and as Jews they knew that deification was literally a soul-destroying error: that it was and always must be fatal to religion. Raise men to God's level: think of man as God: and what you really do is to deny that there is any God at all. You have put a creature in the place of the Creator. There is no place left any more for God. The Jews had come to know this, to realize it, as the cardinal principle of religious faith. The whole strength of their great prophetic creed lay in their acknowledgment of one only God, the supreme Lord and Creator of all things, visible and invisible. "Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God, the Lord is One": that was their guiding star

of faith. No compromise was possible for any Jew. Whatever the explanation was of the extraordinary authority and influence of Jesus Christ: whatever might be the inner secret of His Person, He was not, He could not be, a man who later on had become God. Deification was utterly impossible.

And, secondly, they no less decisively refused to be satisfied with the word *immanence*, or the idea which lies behind it: To say that God is *immanent* in men, or in a man, means that God's Spirit, or God's life, enters in and takes possession. It comes near to the word "inspiration," except that we connect *inspiration* rather with a special gift of utterance: of speaking in the name of God: while *immanence* is broader in its meaning and signifies that the whole of a man's life, and not his words alone, is evidently under God's direct control and guidance. *Immanence*, therefore, is a very high and noble word. If you fill it with its fullest meaning, and, when applying it to Jesus Christ, mean that in Him God was *immanent* in the highest possible degree, in a degree far greater than has ever been true of any other man, you have said a great deal and

made a high confession. But *immanence*, in its greatest possible significance, would not do for the Apostles. It was too limited, too narrow. It stopped short of just what was most real and vital in their experience. You will remember that originally they had been disciples of John the Baptist. They had found *immanence* in him. He was a prophet, the greatest of the prophets. And it was John himself who had sent them to Jesus as to One Who could be to them, and do for them, what he could never be or do. They needed Someone Who could not only baptize them with water but with the Holy Ghost: Someone Who could not only bring them to repentance by convincing them of sin, but could take away their sins. He, John, could not do that. He was inspired. He was a prophet. God was *immanent* in him. But that was not enough. All he could do was to point them to, and send them to, Another Who would begin where he John, had to leave off. And when, obedient to their first master, the disciples went from John to Jesus, they found that John was right: that in Jesus was something more, much more, than *immanence:* more than a God-inspired

man. Power went out from Him, power to which seemingly there was no limit. In Jesus they found Someone Who could act for God: could do for them what no man, however God inspired, could do, but what God alone could do. That was why they refused to speak or think of Him in terms of *immanence*. The word would not fit their need. It would not do.

What finally convinced them that something more than *immanence* was revealed in the Person of Jesus was the cross: that is, the power that came out of His death. They did not realize it at the time. On Good Friday everything seemed lost. They felt beaten, crushed, mocked, utterly despairing. They trusted it was He Who should prove to be Redeemer, but He had miserably failed in face of the unbelief and cruelty of His own people. So it had seemed. But that mood lasted only until Easter. When they were convinced that He was risen, then they go back again to His cross and find in it, not a defeat at all but the very secret of His power: not a gibbet but a throne, the supreme vindication of His Lordship over the lives and destinies of men. If

that were true of Him, there was indeed something more in Him than the word *immanence* could possibly imply. And they must find some word, some phrase, which would make unquestionably clear to men what was *that something more than immanence* which was the very soul of their belief in Him.

So they were led to the belief in Incarnation. As we read the Apostles' writings, we can see their minds irresistibly converging first upon the idea, then upon the word. Let me quote three famous passages by way of illustration. The first is from St. Paul: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." The second, from the Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son Whom He hath appointed heir of all things: by Whom also He made the worlds: Who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person, and upholding all things by the Word of His power, when He had

Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

And lastly, let me repeat the final and unequivocal witness of the Fourth Gospel, where all is said once and for all: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." So the Incarnation of God Himself in Jesus Christ became historically, at the first and for all succeeding Christian ages, the key to the whole Christian creed. Faith in the Incarnation as a historic fact was the fruitful seed out of which came the entire structure of the creed, the whole system of Christian doctrine, discipline and worship.

V

So far we have been concerned only with definition. What is a creed for? What is the Christian creed? How was it made? What does it mean? What is its chief point? I have tried to give answers to these questions: answers not in detail but only in the rough. And I think the answers I have given will stand the test. I think they correspond to

the facts of the case. The definition of Christianity ought to be apart from controversy: it ought to be the same for a Christian and a non-Christian. Whether you believe the creed or not should make no difference in your definition of it. And of course we must have our definitions clear before we can go on to consider questions of truth or value. But at the end comes the personal challenge of it to each one of us. Is it true? Is it to be believed? What are its evidences? Three things I would say, and very briefly:

First, it is extraordinarily complete and comprehensive. It covers all the ground. It meets us at every point of our experience. Nothing in human history or human life is alien to it or apart from it. That is why there has always been a note of finality in Christian teaching. Christianity has never been content to be ranked as one religion among many. It has always boldly claimed to be the fulfillment of all religion. All non-Christian faiths have been as the age-long prayer of humanity to God. The Incarnation is God's answer. That has been the dominant note in Christian missionary preaching. And if the Incarnation

be indeed a fact, then such a claim is fully justified. For there can be no fuller revelation of God to man than by God's taking human nature on Himself. There can be no more perfect fellowship between God and men than is secured for all men and for all time by the Word of God made flesh. This wonderful completeness and finality rightly makes a unique appeal. As Browning puts it:

> "The acknowledgment of God in Christ will solve for thee
> All questions in the world and out of it."

That is the first evidence of truth.

Secondly, the Christian creed has proved itself universally effective at all times and under all conditions. This seems a miracle but it is sober fact. Our Lord came into the world at a particular time and place. He never travelled. He never broke through any of the narrow limits which confined His earthly life. He was a Jew, a peasant, adapting Himself to current customs, to local habits and to existing social and religious organization. That such a life should prove to possess moral and spiritual power in undying and unparalleled degree, with all sorts and conditions of men, with all races and classes and cultures, is a

fact which cries out for explanation. It remains inexplicable unless, with the insight of Apostolic faith, we discern in Jesus the Man of Nazareth none other than the Son of the Most High God incarnate.

Lastly, there is the strange penetrating appeal to every human heart which lies in the audacious challenge of the creed. One of the early fathers of the Church asserts that "every human soul is naturally Christian," by which I suppose he meant that we are so made in our spiritual nature that nothing else or less than such a proof of Divine love could convince or satisfy us. God, if He did that for us, would have the key to unlock our inner secret, and set free the whole strength of our devotion. It was said of our Lord in Gospel days that He had no need to make inquiries about the people whom He met, because "He Himself knew what was in man." *He knows what is in men.* That is the surest evidence. So men have always felt. So we feel to-day. That is the marvel of it. That is the abiding evidence pressing on each one, calling for an answer, forcing us to a decision.

The sum of all is this: every true-hearted

child of man, if he has within him that desire for God which is the earliest impulse of religion: and if, having this, he sits down before the proclamation of God Incarnate in Jesus Christ, and takes it in and lets it sink into his heart and mind; will come to give in his witness that the thing is true, to "set to his seal" as St. John puts it, that to come to Jesus, to believe in Jesus, is to come to God and by faith to abide in fellowship with God, and that *there is no other way*.

III

THE USE OF CREEDS *

I

THE proper or effective *use* of anything is determined by its *usefulness*. You must discover what purpose a thing is meant to serve before you can determine the best way in which to use it. A needle, a piece of bread, a telescope, all are useful, though in very different ways. If you employ each to serve its proper end you will learn the secret of its most effective use, and you will also learn how to discriminate in needles, bread and telescopes. But if you try to eat a telescope, or to see stars through a needle's eye, you will not only be vastly disappointed and chagrined, but you will also wholly miss the true significance of the article you have so grievously misused. You may end by having a permanent prejudice against each of these three eminent servants of

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men's needs. Usefulness, that is, determines use.

That is a very elemental principle. It was inculcated with much anxiety and care, in our nursery days, when the misuse of thoroughly good and useful articles was a constant menace to our infant lives. But, elemental though it be, it is a principle which we in maturer days seem habitually to forget when dealing with more abstract yet more important things than pins or buttons; as, for instance, with the Church's creeds.

It is clear that we are not agreed as to the proper use of creeds, or as to the proper creeds to use. May it not be that the reason for this disagreement is because we are not altogether clear as to the *usefulness* of creeds: as to just what purpose creeds are meant to serve? Certainly the old adage that "One man's meat is another man's poison" is strikingly illustrated in the case of creeds. A friend, of highest character and keenest intellect, who had come out of Unitarian belief into the Church's faith, once told me that he could not take the Nicene Creed upon his lips without a surge of emotion running through him which almost choked his

utterance. Another friend, of recognized Christian leadership and eminent in conference and council, has reiterated his opinion that creeds (especially the Nicene Creed) are enemies of true religion. These cases I take to be fairly typical. And between these two extremes are many shades and degrees of "maximizing" and "minimizing"; of friendly and unfriendly attitude. This state of things suggests the wisdom of "moving the previous question" in order to clarify the issue: to ask, that is, what are creeds for? what is their proper usefulness?

II

Now for modern men a brilliant light has been thrown on this question by what may fairly be called undisputed science. Perhaps the chief achievement of recent psychology has been the demonstration of the dynamic and creative energy of thought, or, to put it more generally, of mental life. This has become an axiom, a first-principle, upon which is reared an immense structure of application and experiment. The theory and practice of suggestion, of psychoanalysis, and of kindred lines of research and investigation, are ultimately based

upon it. The truth of it seems definitely and once for all established. Strangely enough we theological folk have been slow to see the point, or feel the force of it, in our chosen field. We still lend a ready ear to the quite silly fallacy that in religion it does not matter what a man believes. Surely this poisonous error finds its complete and ruthless antidote in the Freudian dictum that, when will and imagination are in conflict, it is always imagination, and not will, which conquers. We may think that the Freudian doctrine goes too far and that his school of teaching sometimes plays fast and loose with words. But past peradventure it is proven for us moderns, not only that "what we think, that we are," but also that "what we think, that we have begun to do." All active life, that is, is of one piece. All is one process. The distinction between theory and practice does not hold. The two indissolubly merge. For theory is practice getting under way.

We Christians should really have been prepared for this. We should have known it all along. From end to end it is embedded in the Gospel. It is fundamental in the simplest ethical teaching of our Lord. It is the basis

of all His moral judgments. The dominance of the inner life is His primary assumption. And, with absolute consistency, the Apostles, and the Church following them, teach that the coming of the Holy Spirit;—which, speaking roughly, signifies God's personal activity in us, —is the fulfillment of all Christ's promises, and work and teachings: the crowning gift which, on the one hand, vindicates the wisdom of God's love, and, on the other, makes redemption a reality. With this clear in our minds, these latest scientific demonstrations ought to have come simply as confirmations of an antecedent faith. Whereas, in point of fact, it has been science which has revealed to us the meaning of the age-long faith, with something of the shock of a wonderful discovery. But, anyhow, and once for all, orthodoxy has been scientifically rehabilitated. "Straight-thinking" about God, which is what orthodoxy means, is seen to be the only means by which we can come into right relationship to Him. If our thought cannot move out in confidence toward God, then no approach of any kind is possible; no contact can be had; no obedience rendered; no prayer or worship offered. What

one really believes of God is the one thing which *practically* matters in religion, for it is one's belief in God, one's thought of God, which controls (I had almost said *creates*) one's whole religious life. Creeds therefore come back with a rush upon us moderns, for they are seen to hold within them the issues of our spiritual destinies. There is latent in them incalculable energy. They come to us welded and shaped with the hot zeal of passionate devotion. They are stored with imperious and compelling spiritual motive power which, if brought into direct action on the lives of men and women, is capable of carrying them on to the blood-red test of martyrdom. Such is the usefulness of creeds, as moderns see, or ought to see it.

III

Of course this holds in a purely Christian context and has a purely Christian application. The phrase "Discipleship of Christ" may serve well enough as a rough and summary account of Christian life. But if we so use the word "discipleship" we must do justice to the psychology of the disciple. We must under-

stand how his discipleship is reached and realized; above all, how it is proved and tested. To be attracted by the moral beauty of the Gospel portrait; to be ready to approve and adopt the rule of life laid down by our Lord in precept and example; all this, good and hopeful as it is, is but to skim the surface of "discipleship." If that is as far as the would-be "disciple" goes, or means to go, he has not made the "great surrender": he is his own man still, not Christ's. Not till his *mind* confirm his *will* can be put his *heart* into obedience: can he freely pour out the full strength of his devotion. In other words the discipleship of a disciple is rooted in, and measured by, his creed.

Here surely we find the reason for our Lord's anxiety as to what His disciple thought about Him: as to what name or title they were prepared to give Him. The real point of the famous incident at Caesarea Philippi often, I think, eludes us. More significant than Peter's answer is the Lord's question which elicited it. Obviously He was not concerned to draw from these men enthusiastic praise, or honorific titles. He cared only to attach

them closely and permanently to Himself: to make them really competent ambassadors and representatives. That could be accomplished only when the homage of their thought gave guarantee that their hearts and wills were at His service. Hence His evident relief, His moving thankfulness, when Peter's "great confession" laid bare for the first time the solid rock: gave Him the promise of a true discipleship, a true devotion, to depend on.

What subsequently happened to Peter and the rest confirms at every point this analysis of the incident at Caesarea Philippi. Peter's high thought about His Master seemed utterly disproved by Calvary.. Emotion was still left: emotion at its highest, breaking the heart. And the allegiance of the will remained intact: none of them would have swerved a hair's breadth from His moral teaching, from the ideal way of life which He had shown. It was their *thought* which had shriveled up and perished. And their *discipleship* had perished with it.* Then came the Easter revelation.

* It is extraordinary how, with many "modernists," the superstition lingers that there is still a Gospel, even if the end came at the cross. Such a view, for a real "modernist" who holds to history and knows psychology, can be only superstition.

Their whole world was changed: that is a commonplace. But what made the change so sudden and so permanent? It was not that they loved Him any better, or that, more than ever, they hung upon His words. It was simply that their *creed* had been recovered. Their thought about Him had been to crown Him Lord. And that thought about Him was now, once for all, once and forever, proved to be true. He was all that they had thought Him; all and more; how much more they were to learn, and learn to tell to others. Now they could love Him unreservedly "with all their mind" and, so loving Him, their lives were triumphantly and wholly His, in adoration and in sacrifice. So, for our learning and enlightenment, the new psychology makes its comment on the ancient history. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." St. Paul here sounds the depths of the potency of "orthodoxy"; of the power of the creed to make disciples. And the well-furnished, "up-to-date," Christian psychologist will fully justify St. Paul. Nothing less than the

sincere confession of the Christian creed can bring the life of the confessor under the complete dominion of the Lord. Mind moves the man. If the mind is Christ's, the man is Christ's. Christ holds him who holds the creed. The office of the creed then is to make disciples. Nothing else can do it; nothing less can bind the disciple irrevocably to the Master, or make the would-be Christian wholly Christ's. That is the creed's work; that is its usefulness.

IV

Now this is not merely theory: it is overwhelmingly proved by the whole course of Christian history. It has been in fact the Christian creed which from the beginning has made men and women into Christ's disciples, binding them to Him, "grappling their souls with hooks of steel." There can be no question of the creed's effectiveness as an instrument for the making of disciples. The great tide of martyr-like devotion to our Lord, running steadily, undiminished and unbroken, through the centuries; the worship and adoration poured out before Him; the purity and beauty

of the host of Christian saints; the heroic love and labor of missionary leaders; all have come from, and are explained by, the corporate creed of the believing body.

I emphasize that phrase: *the corporate creed* of the believing body. For we as Churchmen are concerned with nothing else or less than that. For us there is, and can be, but one creed, the symbol of the one faith of the one Church. We may speak of *creeds* as in the plural, and doubtless there are two creeds in our Prayer Books. But as Churchmen we are bound to take account, not of their separateness, but of their essential unity. They are not variants, or alternatives. They do not represent diverse or divergent interpretations of the Church's mind about its Lord. They are quite identical in meaning. They have an identical experience behind them. They bear common and convincing witness, not to the views of particular individuals, or groups, or cultures, or conditions, or races, or ages, but to the whole faith of the whole body. That is why we prize them and rely on them. That is what we mean when we say they have a quite unique and unparalleled authority. For

within them lies the communicated secret of the victorious spiritual power which the Church has had from the beginning. By means of them the Church has told, in condensed summary, the whole story of the faith which has overcome the world. And the work was done in no haphazard fashion, but with the most careful and scrupulous deliberation. The Church wrought out its creed bit by bit, sentence by sentence, almost word by word, in the face of questions, doubts, denials and disputes. It was thoroughly tested, and only after thorough test, and because it was found to correspond with, and to do justice to, the faith by which the body of believers lived, was it universally and confidently accepted and proclaimed. The vitality and vigor of the Church's creed to-day—in both its most familiar forms—its continuous and continuing adequacy to the Church's need, is an extraordinary, almost a *miraculous*, evidence, in view of the circumstances and the vicissitudes of history, of its expert competence to do its work. It is with this in view that we must face the question as to how this august creed may best be used. Its usefulness must properly decide its use.

We who are bent on the sacred work of securing disciples for our Lord, will in any case, if we are wise, aim to take captive for Him men's inmost thoughts; to make Him sole and undisputed Lord of the whole range and content of their mental life. We have seen this to be the crucial point in the making of disciples. How shall we do this? There is a perfectly clear answer: by bringing men to believe, in the full meaning of belief, the Christian Creed. But have we the true Christian creed? Can it be identified? Is it available? Again the answer is quite clear: the Church is one: the Church's faith is one: the Church's creed is one: and we have that creed at hand, intact, complete, as explicit, as sufficient, as effective, as when it first took form.

V

I have spent much time and space in what may seem wholly preliminary to the real matter in debate: in discussing, that is, what at the start I called "the previous question." I have so far dealt only with the *usefulness* of creeds, and in particular of those creeds which, representing as they uniquely do, the

essential faith of the whole Church, are alone and rightly known as Catholic. I have said nothing as to *use*. But, if I have made my point as to the creeds' usefulness, the time has not been wasted, for, with this settled, the question of use at once becomes much more limited and simple. Indeed the debate is taken almost wholly out of the arena and atmosphere of controversy. For if my contentions hold, then *optional* use of creeds can mean hardly more than *wise* or *prudent* use. The debate hinges on the point as to how, and when, and where, the immense dynamic power of these proved and tested symbols of the Church's faith can be most effectively employed. It would be certainly unreasonable, even irrational, to think of leaving out the creeds in the supposed interest of religious propaganda, for religious propaganda depends entirely on creeds, history and psychology being consenting and convincing witnesses. Nor can there be any really reasonable plea for the substitution of other or of better creeds than those in our Prayer Books. There are no *other* creeds which adequately enshrine the Church's faith, and there can be no *better* ones if the test

of excellence in creeds is to be found in ability to build up the believing body; to make tried and true disciples out of all nations.

We have, in other words, in our possession the best of all possible instruments for the doing of a given work; an instrument tested and tempered, shaped and adapted with extraordinary nicety to our purpose. We are indeed responsible for its right use. With this responsibility we have concomitantly the choice or option of changing or varying, not the creeds themselves, but the use we make of them under our present rules. Is there need of changing our rules and rubrics? Are we as a matter of fact using the creeds in the best way? That would seem the real point and center of debate.

As a problem it is neither very serious nor very difficult. The history of the use of creeds is singularly plain. From the first the creeds have served the Church in two essential needs: the need of worship and the need of teaching. The creeds provide, on the one hand, means for the corporate confession of the common faith, to the glory and praise of God; and, on the other hand, they furnish careful and well-considered formulas for the instruction of

catechumens who desire full and free share in the Church's worship and service of its Lord. We to-day use the creeds in precisely the same way, in our Eucharists and at our Baptisms. This two-fold use clearly sets the norm. Common-sense, no less than reason, necessarily approves it. All other uses can be only subsidiary or preparatory.

In the Eucharist, there is a reasonable question as to the creed's invariable use. There is some weighty precedent against it. But in any case the creed is irrevocably and inextricably woven into the warp and woof of the Church's Eucharistic worship, whether it be separately said or not. So there is no great problem here.

As to Baptism, infants indeed are rightly brought to be baptized, though they have neither faith nor creed. Yet the Church is justified in so receiving them only if she is ready to secure them in their full inheritance of faith and grace (of which the creed is title-deed), and to see to it that they are "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord": that is, brought up to hold the creed and to be held by it in true discipleship. And in the case of adults desiring Baptism or

Confirmation, yet held by doubts or difficulties, a policy of concession or of minimizing in matters of belief does not and cannot provide the right solution. It involves a double error. It does injustice alike to the Church and to the catechumens. An analogy is found in the military training of recruits. As "rookies" men may be quite full of zeal and fervor. It would doubtless be a great joy and satisfaction to them to be sent at once into the fighting line. Certainly their patriotism should be recognized and welcomed. But to employ them in the service without experience or knowledge would as surely expose them to unnecessary danger as it would weaken, and not strengthen, the army's fighting force. In like manner, to admit to the Church's communion and fellowship men and women imperfectly prepared, only partially converted or convinced, is to jeopardize their own spiritual safety no less than the Church's integrity and missionary power.

Grace does not work mechanically. Grace works through faith and is received according to, and in the measure of, the faith of them that seek it. The Church is not a society of special privilege, dispensing favors on certain arbitrary

terms. The Church is the witnessing and working Body of the Lord. Salvation is not merely release from pain and penalty; not merely the gift of peace and pardon. Salvation is sound spiritual health ministered to men by Christ that He may have on earth servants who can truly serve Him in the extension of His kingdom, and who will find their own salvation in His service. The creed is the Church's "manual of arms" in its spiritual warfare. It is the Church's measure of spiritual preparedness for worship and for work. Only in the strength of the faith enshrined and embodied in the Creed can men be made meet for the Lord's use and able to appropriate and to apply His grace.

VI

The sum of all seems to be this. We have very probably misused, and very possibly abused, the Church's creeds. We have almost certainly neglected them and misinterpreted their purpose. But we shall be better guided in exercising the *option* which is ours already and in any case—the option, that is, of using the creeds with better understanding of their

nature and of the spiritual needs of men—than in seeking to establish new rules governing the use of creeds by the authority of General Convention.

IV

THE CREED AND THE MINISTRY *

I

RECENT notorious events have forced this matter to the front. Much has happened to shock and distress all right-minded Christian people. Yet shocks, though painful, may be salutary. They may rouse us out of culpable and dangerous indifference: out of a false and blind security. God grant it may be so in this case. For this matter of the Church's Creed is absolutely crucial. We neglect it at our spiritual peril. And we all, clergy and laity alike, have been grossly negligent. That is the reason why, when attacks are made upon the Creed: when its importance is denied and even ridiculed: when its plain meaning is diluted or distorted by shallow sophistry or by pseudo-science: that is why

* Part of a charge to the Convention of the Diocese of Pennsylvania; 1923.

we know not where to turn or what to answer: that is why there is so much wild and foolish talk: so little calm and clear facing of the issue. We have been caught off our guard. We have been thrown into confusion and dismay at the very point where our lines should have been most closely ordered: and our defence most sure and impregnable.

I say the question of the Church's Creed is crucial. For if the Church disown her Creed, she cuts off the very life-blood from her heart: she severs the arteries through which the grace of God flows in. That is literally true. And, that being true, it follows that if any of the Church's officers disown the Church's Creed, either in private faith or public teaching, *while yet retaining office*, they are not merely guilty of the breach of a most sacred trust which they have sworn to keep inviolate: they are also responsible in God's sight for the spiritual disaster that must follow to their own flocks first, and through them to the Church at large.

II

These are strong words and I am justified in using them only on one condition: only, that is, if it be really true that the Creed is vitally important to the Church. But is that true? The Creed is a formula, a set of sentences, so many words. How can a formula be vital? How can mere words save life? Well, let us see. In this case illustration will help us more than argument.

Now it is most certain that life or death *may* hang upon a word; they often do. A signpost, for example, may mean, has often meant, to a lost traveller, the difference between food, warmth, shelter, safety on the one hand: and hunger, cold, exposure, danger on the other. Deface it, conceal it, break it down: and you take away his hope: you rob him of his chance. A stroke or two of paint, a word or two in print, bring life: their absence, death.

Or take a chart: giving the soundings: showing the rocks and reefs: marking the channel with its lights and buoys. A chart will guide a ship to port with all souls safe. But tamper with it, mark it wrongly, tear it up,

and the best skill of helmsman counts for naught and the ship goes on the rocks.

Or, coming closer, a physician's orders for his patient: the prescription which he writes and leaves behind him: the treatment he advises: these, if he has skill and has rightly diagnosed the case, may be the means of cure: may bring life out of death. But if the doctor's orders are forgotten: if his formulas and medicines are altered: or his advice ignored, the patient may die who might have lived.

Now the Church's Creed is like a sign-post: like a sea-chart: like a medical prescription. It points the way to God. It marks the course to steer by from this world to the next. It tells us how we may be healed, and pass from sin to holiness, from death to life.

III

And it does all this, and claims authority to do it, in the name of Jesus Christ. It all comes from Him and leads to Him. It all depends on Him. The Creed speaks of Jesus Christ in every single syllable. Look at its history. See where it came from. There is no need of scholarship, or scientific training, or critical

acumen. He who runs may read. Turn the pages of the New Testament: the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles: and see it taking place under your very eyes. First came the *impression* made by their new Master on the devout, plastic, simple-minded Jewish artisans who were His first disciples. Then came their *expression* of the impression which He had made on them: their account, that is, of what He had come to mean to them. They found in Him guidance, healing, light and life. He grew to be to them Lord, Saviour, Judge: their all in all. There was no limit to His influence, authority, sufficiency for all their needs. And then, one day, they said so: they spoke it out: they wrote it down: Peter first, at Caesarea Philippi: then doubting Thomas: then John and Jude and James: and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews: and Paul: and Stephen and every other Apostolic writer and confessor. The whole New Testament from end to end is but the record of it and the witness to it. Faith became vocal: love found expression: thought put on words. So the Church's Creed was born: for worship and for witness: for praise

and propaganda. That is its origin and history. The Deity of Jesus Christ is indeed the core and centre of the Creed, but it is so because it was first the core and centre of the faith of which the Creed is the symbol and expression. The first disciples found Him, their Lord and Master, doing for them what God alone can do: being to them what God alone can rightly be. He did the work of God: He played the part of God: He took the place of God. And so they called Him God, and made the Creed.

IV

And mark you, it is no exaggeration to say that the first disciples made the Creed as we now have it: as the Church has held it ever since. For it all comes—the whole of it, in its shorter or its longer form—it all comes, every syllable and word of it, from that great discovery, from that tremendous affirmation, that Jesus, the man of Nazareth, is none other than the Son of God. There was no Creed before that great discovery was made. And in the Church's Creed there was nothing really new inserted afterwards. For the Creed is

not a string of detached sentences: it is one whole. It is articulated: that is, made up of articles or members, as a body is made up of inseparable limbs and joints. If you wound or mutilate a living body, at any point, you begin a process which, unless checked, will drain it of its blood: will put its very life in peril.

So with the Church's Creed. Each article has its own place in the whole truth which the Creed tells about the Church's Lord. Tear any one of them out of its place and the process of depletion instantly begins. The truth and grace of Jesus Christ is lost, by just so much, to His Church and therefore to His world. He becomes *less* than He is, *less* than He might be, *less* than He wills to be, to us for our salvation. His hold is loosened: He becomes remote: He fades into the background: into the pages of a book: into the events of a past history: and, almost ere we know it, we have left to us only a memory, only a voice calling uncertainly across the centuries, only a good man and a great teacher: we are left—God pity us—we are left, just as St. Paul told us we should be left, *in our sins*, without

redemption, without a Saviour, without hope, without God in the world.

v

Does this seem overwrought imagination? Do you doubt it? Every Christian century, every epoch of the Church's history, will furnish illustration. But you do not have to look so far afield. Look about you now. Think of those reputed Christian teachers, some of them Priests in our Church, who are now urging us to "simplify" the Creed (as they like to put it) by leaving out the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of the Body. *Why* do they ask it? What is the difficulty? Nothing is more certain than that these two articles present no difficulty to those who whole-heartedly accept the Incarnation: that is, who affirm with the Apostles, with the New Testament, with the Church from the beginning that, "for us men and for our salvation," the only Begotten Son of God "came down from Heaven . . . and was made man." If that be really true, there is no difficulty in these articles. On the contrary, they are natural and almost inevitable consequences. Even if there were no

word in Holy Scripture as to the way in which He entered, and then left, this earthly life, we should be almost driven to suppose, by the very logic of our faith, that His entrance and His exit must have been unique, in keeping with His own absolute uniqueness. His Virgin Birth, the Resurrection of His Body, give us what we need in our thought of Him. They complete the picture: they make it all one simple, solid, satisfying whole.

Where then is the difficulty? Why do these men ask that these articles be stricken out? Well, for answer we may very safely look much deeper down, much farther back. And so looking we shall have no great trouble in finding what the real reason is. For the logic of disbelief is as peremptory and inexorable as the logic of belief. If to believers in the Incarnation these articles seem quite natural and congruous, to those who disbelieve it they must seem the very opposite. If Jesus Christ is *not* the only Begotten Son of God made man; if, in the last analysis, He is but a man among other men although the best of men, then a Virgin Mother and a risen body are empty portents, foolish superstitions, unnecessary,

even contradictory. They disfigure and degrade the quiet, normal story of a merely human birth and a merely human death.

Have I made it clear? Do you see the point? Do you see how the thing works itself out, for belief on the one hand, for disbelief on the other? Do you see why I am justified in saying that the Creed of the Church stands or falls as one inseparable whole? If the Church disown one part of it, in the end she will find herself disowning all. And when the Church disowns her Creed, she dies, for she will have separated herself from her Lord, from the Giver of her life.

VI

One word here dealing with the Creed's authority. What do we mean by the word *authority* in this connection? There is a clear distinction to be drawn. The Church has no power, human or divine, to *compel* men to believe her Creed. Men cannot be compelled to believe, even that there is a God or a life beyond the grave. There was no compulsion on men to believe in our Lord when He was visibly among them. Some did, but most did

not. Even among the Apostolic group, Judas turned traitor. And obviously disbelief prevailed. He was rejected, mocked and crucified. And shall the Church's Creed prevail where the Church's Lord did not prevail? Shall it compel belief when He did not compel belief? Of course not. The very notion is absurd. Why, to-day the majority of living men and women, even of those who are familiar with the Creed, reject it. Only a minority believe it.

Yes, but the Church is part of that minority. That is the point. The Church believes the Creed. The Creed is authoritative for the Church. The Church has no other faith: has never had another faith: except that of the Creed by which she has lived from the beginning, from her very birthday. The Church has no reason for existence in this world except to propagate her faith and to persuade men to accept her Creed. The Church has no authority to compel any man's belief, but she has an indefeasible and authoritative claim upon the truth and honor of her agents and ambassadors.

VII

Brethren, there is no dishonor or disgrace in poverty, whether it be poverty of purse or poverty of faith. Why, our Lord came to preach the Gospel to the poor. He loves the poor. And He is particularly patient with those who, being poor in faith, come to Him for more. "Lord, increase our faith": no prayer is more sure of His answer. Think how patiently, how tenderly, He dealt with His Apostles in their stupidity and dulness: in their misunderstandings and mistakes: how He was content to wait till the seed of faith which He had planted had taken root and grown and become strong enough to make its "great confession." We must try to be as patient and as tender as He is with those who can scarcely believe in the full glory of the Gospel of the grace of God. No; poverty is not dishonor.

Dishonor comes only when we use dishonest means for the relief of our poverty. To steal another's purse because our own is empty *is* dishonest. And faith means more than money: therefore, to take away another's faith because

our own is failing is still more dishonest. Be on your guard as you listen to the facile praise of "*liberalism*" in religion: particularly of "*liberalism*" in dealing with the Church's Creed. Much modern talk in praise of "liberalism" is but the prostitution of a noble word. It is easy to be *liberal* with other people's money, but it is not praiseworthy. And it is not advisable if you desire liberty. For it is apt to lead not to liberty, but to its opposite. And even the world knows what to call it. It calls it stealing. The kind of liberalism which gives away the Church's faith, having little of its own, deserves a harsher name and will receive, if God be just, a sterner punishment.

To sum all up, to say a final word, remember who it was Who said "whosoever shall cause to stumble one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were cast into the sea." God guard us from that condemnation. God send us men. God keep us true.

V

THE NICENE CREED TO-DAY *

"Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world." St. John IV:42.

I

SIXTEEN hundred years ago there was assembled a council of the Christian Church in the city of Nicaea in Asia Minor. Nicaea to-day is but a wretched Turkish village, symbol of alien conquest and oppression. But in the year 325 it was a worthy and convenient place of meeting for the Church. The centre of Christian influence and population was at that time still in the East. Nicaea was the second city in the Province of Bithynia. It was prosperous and populous and easily accessible. It was only a few miles distant from the palace of the Emperor Constantine at Nicomedia and it was the Emperor himself

* Preached in the Bethlehem Chapel, Washington Cathedral, at a Service in commemoration of the 1600th Anniversary of the Council of Nicaea; 1925.

who had summoned the Council and was to preside over its sessions.

Of the complete sincerity of Constantine's conversion to Christianity there may be perhaps a reasonable doubt. But there can be no doubt at all of the favor and goodwill which he showed toward the Church during his reign as sole ruler of the Empire. He treated the Church as the chief ally of his throne. He aimed in every way to promote the Church's welfare. He made it a chief matter of political concern to secure and deserve the support and loyalty of his Christian subjects. Something of what this meant to the Christian population of the Empire will come home to us if we recall that up to the year 311, that is only fourteen years before the Council of Nicaea, the Edict of the Emperor Diocletian, directing the destruction of the Christian religion throughout the Roman realm, was still in force. This Edict had marked the disastrous climax of the successive waves of persecution which since the days of Nero had broken on the Church. And now, hardly more than a decade afterwards, the successor of Diocletian in the seat of supreme power, is

summoning the first great Council of the Church and himself presiding at its sessions.

All the Bishops of the Church were summoned to Nicaea. There are said to have been not less than two thousand of them altogether. This is worth noting especially by those of us who may not fully realize how incurably Episcopal the Church was in those early days. More than three hundred of them actually came, with their attendant clergy. Under the circumstances it was a fair proportion and a very representative assembly. Indeed it was the most truly representative assembly of the Church that ever met. Naturally the majority were Eastern Bishops. But there were some from the Western Mediterranean Dioceses, men of recognized influence and leadership, standing in close and trusted relation to the Emperor. Hosius, Bishop of Cordova in Spain, universally respected and beloved, was perhaps the leading figure. Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, also played a central part, for it was in his Diocese that Arius, the rector of a fashionable city parish, started the doctrinal dispute which led to the calling of the Council. And in the train of

Bishop Alexander came the great Athanasius, then only a Deacon, but already wise and strong in counsel, with clear mental grasp and piercing spiritual insight. The Bishop of Rome was too old a man to travel, but two of his presbyters were on hand to represent him. So the stage was set and the Council came together, in the month of June and in the year of our Lord 325.

II

Before we pass on to consider what the Council did, notice two points of special interest. Nicaea was the *first* General, or Ecumenical, Council of the Church. The first Council, that is, which was deliberately planned so that every local church or community of Christians throughout the Roman Empire might have its place and part. The Church as a whole, as one Body under one Head (and that Head, not the Bishop of Rome, but the Lord Christ Himself), was summoned for the first time in its history to come together to bear witness to its common faith. In those days the unity of the Church was very real. It had been so from the beginning. From its

very birth the Church was intensely conscious of its unity. It had one faith, one Lord, one Baptism: one rule of worship, one way of life; one recognized and universal apostolic ministry. Long before the New Testament was written (and remember that even when the Council of Nicaea met the complete New Testament as we now have it had not yet come into existence) this new close-knit society or fellowship of Christians was building itself up and spreading itself out in all directions. The Gospel made its way, not as a spoken message, but as a social movement, as a Divine Society reaching out to gather all men one by one into its membership. And now, after some three hundred years, a great dispute had come to distress and try men's souls. New and startling assertions were being made. The very foundations of the faith, which had been handed down from the Apostles, were being questioned. How should these questionings be answered? How should these doubts be set at rest? Why, the whole Church must do it. The whole body must decide. The faith was a corporate, not an individual, possession. It belonged to the whole body. Then let the body bear its wit-

ness. Let the whole body meet and say its Creed. That is the meaning of Nicaea. That is why Nicaea marks an epoch in Church history.

And in this great representative assembly there were only Bishops. That is a second point of interest. The body of believers acted through its chief officials. As the Bishops spoke in council: as they signed their names to the conciliar decrees, so the whole Church everywhere, its entire membership, was held to have given in its testimony and to have certified its common faith.

Now that is not a method of procedure which would be congenial to modern minds or manners. In these days a Church assembly made up entirely of Bishops would hardly be regarded as fully and finally representative. Indeed there is abroad a rather definite opinion that a meeting of the House of Bishops will bear watching! We must remember that in the sixteen centuries which intervene between us and Nicaea much water has flowed under the bridge. Much has happened to weaken and discredit old traditions. And especially in those sixteen hundred years the greatest of all spiritual tragedies has overtaken us in the

disunion and disunity of Christendom. It is this dismemberment of the one holy Body of the Church which for us makes the Nicene Council seem impossible and quite unreal. Not only in its composition and methods of procedure, but in the very idea and ideal that underlay it, it is alien to it, almost inconceivable in these present days.

Yet when all is said and done, the ancient Church, one and undivided, was in the right about its Bishops and in its treatment of them. The very genius of Episcopacy is in its representative, or, if you prefer the word, its democratic character. The much-feared and much-abused doctrine of Apostolic Succession really means just this: that through the ages, from the Apostles down to us, the Church has had in its Bishops an unbroken line of certified and competent trustees set over its spiritual treasury. By and through its Bishops the Church guarantees to all its members everywhere and always that they shall have their portion of meat in due season; that they shall be secured in all their rights and privileges as members of God's great family on earth. And at least in those early days (to say no more,

to make no larger claim), the Bishops manfully and truly played their part. They were faithful in their stewardship. They were worthy of their people's trust. In persecution and amid the storms of controversy, they stood their ground steadily and strongly, not exploiting their own individual ideas, not for their own personal ambition or prestige, but as wise and faithful guardians and shepherds of their flocks. As they came together at Nicaea from every corner of the Empire, they brought their people with them in their minds and hearts. They were moved by a sense of great responsibility. They were, as no other men could possibly have been, adequate and worthy representatives of the whole Church. So the Council met, truly ecumenical and entirely Episcopal, and the one because it was the other.

III

So meeting, what did the Council do? The main point can be very briefly put. Open your Prayer Books where the two Creeds—the Apostles' and the Nicene—are printed one above the other. Compare the second paragraphs of the two Creeds: or, more exactly, take

the phrase in the Apostles' Creed which reads: *in Jesus Christ His only Son Our Lord,* and lay it side by side with the corresponding phrase out of the Nicene Creed which is as follows (as we have just been saying it): *In one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Begotten Son of God; Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God: Light of Light: Very God of Very God: Begotten, not made: Being of one substance with the Father: By Whom all things were made.* Now these two sentences: the one so short, the other so much longer, mean precisely the same thing. In the one case the Church's faith in Jesus Christ is rolled up into exceedingly small compass. In the other case, precisely the same faith has been unrolled or *evolved,* as we should put it in our modern phrase.*

That is to say the identical faith in our Lord has been unrolled from five words into forty-five: and very wonderful and moving and majestic words they are.

Why was the unrolling done? what was the

* It is worth while to note, in passing, that the word "evolution," rightly used, always means the unrolling or rolling out of what is already present, *but rolled up.*

motive? In answer let me use a homely illustration. Suppose I were to say to you: "I have a friend whom I think you also know. I have great trust in him." You might say in answer: "Yes, I know him, and I agree with you. I feel as you do." If you said that there would be no need of saying more. But if you were to say: "Yes, I know your friend, but I am not so sure about him. What makes you have so much confidence in him? how far are you really prepared to trust him?" If you said that, then I should go on. I should have a great deal more to say. I should go into more detail. I should tell more of what my friend had done for me and been to me: how he had never failed me: why I was prepared to trust him to the limit. It might take some time and many words before I should feel sure I had done justice to my friend and to my faith in him. But I should not be adding anything to what I meant in the first place when I simply said: "I have a friend in whom I greatly trust." Except for your doubts and questions I should not have said another word. But you did doubt and question. What else could I do but answer?

Now that is just what happened at Nicaea; what gives the reason for Nicaea. Up to that time the Church had never had one formal carefully wrought out universal creed. Local communities of Christians, East and West, were accustomed to use short and simple summaries of what was universally believed by Christians everywhere. These were called Baptismal Creeds. They were used chiefly at the administration of Holy Baptism. They served as tests and guarantees that the candidates for Baptism were prepared to believe what the Church believed and taught. The most famous and familiar of these Baptismal Creeds is the one which we know as the Apostles' Creed, and which we use at our Baptisms.

For the purpose, and for the time, these early Creeds sufficed. The whole belief of the Creed was, as I have said, rolled up in them; just as my belief in my friend might be rolled up in the four words: "I greatly trust him."

But as time passed questions were asked and doubts suggested. It was quite inevitable. For as the Church made its way and gained in influence, it came into contact and

conflict with other philosophies and faiths. It was called on to explain: to amplify: to give its reasons: to say more precisely what it meant. "You say you believe that Jesus Christ is Lord," so the question came. "But in what sense? Lord of what? of whom? How far does His Lordship reach? has it any limits, and if so, what are they?" Or again: "You call Him the Only Son of God? Surely a son cannot be equal to His Father. For a son is dependent on his father, and created by his father, and if Jesus Christ was created, if He is a creature, how can He be really God?"

Or once more: "You talk about an incarnation: about God Who is spirit taking flesh? How can this be true? Perhaps you do not take it literally: perhaps all that you mean is that you think Jesus Christ is a kind of demi-god: more than man no doubt; but less than God: a man so pure and good that he was raised to Divine honors. That would not seem so difficult: not so inconceivable. Tell us then: we want to know: what really is your creed?" What could the Church do, facing such a question, but find an answer: but unroll her creed? Very carefully and con-

scientiously she did it: choosing words, and testing phrases: seeking the best form and medium at hand for making clear, past all gainsaying, what she thought about the Lord: not concerned with argument: not interested in speculation: only anxious to declare the truth of Jesus Christ as it had been revealed to her: as it had become her very life and breath. And at Nicaea the Church spoke out: and made her answer. "From the beginning I have said Jesus is Lord: Jesus is Son of God. All my faith and hope and love are in those words. But you say this does not satisfy you: that it is ambiguous: that you want more. Well, here it is. Here is what I mean. Jesus is only begotten Son: begotten, not created: eternally begotten before time was: always the Son: the only Son. He is God coming out from God: Light shining forth from Light. He is one with the Father. He is of the very essence of the Father. It is He by Whom all things were made. It is He Whom I worship and adore as Very God. It is He, and none other, Who was incarnate: Who was made man."

IV

Summed up then very briefly, that was what the Council of Nicaea did and why it did it. Was it good work? was it really worth the doing? was it well done? Men have said "no" and are still saying it. They would persuade us that the Nicene Council was led off on a side issue: that it lost its way among unintelligible mysteries: that the Nicene Creed conceals rather than reveals the simple Gospel. Nay, more, men tell us that it does not really matter just what you think of Jesus Christ: what names you call Him by: what rank you give Him. Rather the essential thing is to take His words to heart and try to live by them: to set His human life before you and try to imitate it. There lies the real heart of Christianity: not in Nicene doctrine. Well, that point of view is quite familiar, and at first sight sounds very plausible. But it is at least a comfort to remember that it is not a modern point of view at all: though you often hear it on lips of modern men. So far from being "modern" it is in fact older than Nicaea. You would have come across it in the second

and third centuries in Alexandria and Antioch just as you come across it now: shall we say, in Boston and New York? And it was just that kind of thing: just that point of view: which the Nicene Fathers met together to repudiate and to deny. They were persuaded: those three hundred Bishops speaking for the Church: that the very heart and soul of their religion was at stake. As Athanasius puts it in a memorable phrase: "*our contest was for our all.*" And, brethren, if you fairly think of it and face the issue, there can be no doubt that the contest at Nicaea *was* for our all: that the Christian religion was at stake.

Mark you, I say the *Christian religion:* not the Ten Commandments: not the moral Law: not even the Sermon on the Mount. But the Christian religion as a whole and in its every part. For the Christian religion is centered in the Person of our Lord. It means personal relationships to Him. It has been well and truly said that Jesus Christ came into the world, not to preach a Gospel, but that there might be a Gospel to be preached, and that Gospel was Himself. Christianity, I say, from the beginning has meant personal relation-

ship to Jesus Christ, and Christians believe that personal relationship to Jesus Christ means personal fellowship with God.

Now if we, poor, weak, blind and sinful men really can come into living fellowship with the Almighty: the All Holy One: something wonderful has happened to us: something that has freed us from our sins and braced our wills and quieted our fears and lifted us out of our ignorance and blindness. Somehow, somewhere, the grace of God has touched us and transformed us. The power of God has entered into us and renewed and recreated us, and drawn us to holiness. And the Christian message from the very first has been that this wonderful thing has really happened: and that it has all come about through Jesus Christ. "If any one be in Christ he is a new creature." So St. Paul had put it. That is just what Christians feel and have felt from the beginning.

What difference does it make then what name we call Him by: what rank we give Him? Why, it makes all the difference between delusion and reality, between truth and falsehood. If Jesus Christ has *not really* done

all this for us and for all men: if it is *not* within His power to do it: why then we are trusting in a lie.

Man must have a Saviour: not an example only: but a Saviour, for man cannot save himself. Now only God can save. If Jesus be not God, then Jesus cannot save. To deny His Godhead is not simply to dishonor Him: it is to rob men of their Saviour: to leave them in their sins: separated from the life of God, without God in the world. "Our contest was for our all." It was quite true.

It was good work, then, that the Council did: work that greatly needed doing. And they did their work extraordinarily well. They made the real meaning of the Christian faith so clear that there could be no mistaking it thereafter.

From that day to this, through sixteen centuries, their statement of the Faith has held a place throughout all Christendom, entirely unique, quite without a rival, needing neither addition nor subtraction, as the sufficient and convincing answer of the universal Church to the great question: "What think ye of Christ?"

V

Finally, what is it to us? what do we owe to this great Council: and how shall we pay our debt?

Well, we owe to it the fact that the Christian religion has survived and is still a living power and energy among us. But for Nicaea the Gospel of Christ "would have dwindled away into a legend:" a fairy tale: a myth: a memory. "If we are Christians"—I am quoting the measured words of a great scholar and clear thinker—"if we are Christians in the sense of St. Paul (and the Apostles) we owe it under God to the work of the great Synod." That is not exaggeration: not mere rhetoric. History has proved it in the past: is proving it to-day. Wherever the Nicene faith in Jesus Christ has been abandoned or abated by groups or communities of men still calling themselves Christians (and there have been many instances), there has always followed, there must always follow, increasing uncertainty and doubt of the reality of spiritual things: even of God Himself. When a ship's anchor rope is cut, the vessel immediately

starts to drift, though perhaps very slowly. So men, though still meaning to be Christians, if they let go the Nicene Creed, drift out of the clear light and true knowledge of God, which Christ came into the world to give. It may be very gradual. For spiritual tides run slowly. But it is sure. It is but sober truth to say that if we have still among us living, saving, conquering Christian faith, we owe it, under God, to the Council of Nicaea.

But to recognize this and to thank God for it, is not to pay our debt. For there is no magic in a formula; even in the Nicene Creed. Believing it may be, indeed, a badge of orthodoxy, but merely to believe it is no proof of, and no substitute for, Christian living. Really to believe it is to live by it: or rather to live by and with and for Him Whom the Nicene Creed exalts and glorifies. It is not enough to exalt Him in our thought and spoken word to the very throne of Godhead: to a perfect equality with God: unless He is in very truth, in life and death, God of God *for us*.

It is not enough—rather it is to risk certain condemnation—to call Him Lord in the full sense taught us by the Nicene Fathers unless

we crown Him Lord of our lives and give Him His throne within our hearts, to reign without a rival.

Would you be Nicene Christians? Then, say to those three hundred Bishops, in the confidence that they will hear, in spite of sixteen separating centuries:

"Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and *know* that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

VI

THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD *

"I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God." Acts XX : 27.

THE whole counsel of God: the phrase goes very deep and far. First: it takes us to the heart of Christian faith. Secondly: it gives the reason for the Church's tenacious hold upon the Creed. Consider each point separately. Each has a timely message.

I

The whole counsel of God: there lies the secret of the Church's faith. In the Lord Jesus is revealed the *whole* counsel of God for us men and for our salvation. In Him *whole* God comes to *whole* man. So the Church has believed from the beginning: from the moment of its birth. The Church was born believing

* Preached at the Consecration of the Rev. Samuel Babcock Booth as Bishop Coadjutor of Vermont; 1925.

it. And out of that belief has sprung every power and energy of Christian life: every act of Christian worship: every grace of Christian character.

Indeed it is this *wholeness* of the Gospel of our Lord, as revealed by the Spirit to the Church, which gives its true meaning to the great word *catholic*. We commonly take *catholic* to mean simply *universal*. But surely mere extension, even to the four corners of the earth, has no great merit or significance. A patent medicine may be found everywhere and make its way into every home, but that does not prove it is a sure cure for disease. Ability to *take men in* is, by itself, an ambiguous qualify or gift. On no such insecure foundation can the Church's catholicity be based. The Church is catholic, not because it is found everywhere but because it really can save everybody: because it has "the whole counsel of God," and can therefore bring to every man all that any man can ever ask in his search for, and life with, God.

But note carefully that *wholeness* does not mean monopoly. The Church has the *whole* truth and the *whole* grace of Jesus Christ but

it has not *all* His truth and grace. It has no monopoly.

God is not bound. He has indeed His regular ways of working. He has His *laws*, as we somewhat blindly call them. These laws, these normal methods, these settled habits, of God's providence are altogether good and blessed. They are signs and proofs of God's unending patience; of His enduring faithfulness. We should be quite lost without them. We should not know what to expect from day to day. But God's laws are not fetters which obstruct His will and restrain His love. They do not hamper or impede His freedom. So the truth and the grace of God are found not only in the Church: they are found outside its boundaries as well. Whenever truth is spoken, it is God's truth and has been taught by Him. Whenever righteousness is done, it is God's righteousness, gift of His grace and fruit of His Spirit. We are false to our faith unless we claim for, and ascribe to, our Lord all truth, all beauty, and all goodness which ever have been, and ever will be, in the world.

But this makes only the more apparent, and the more convincing, the *wholeness* of the rev-

elation entrusted to the Church. Here we find, not scattered pieces or fragments of the truth, but all parts and pieces of it knit together, fitted each to each, and all fulfilled in Him Who is the Truth: not mere isolated rays of light, shining here and there in the prevailing darkness, but the great central Sun lighting the world: no sudden stream, starting from out the stricken rock, but rivers of living water running to quench a whole world's thirst: no mere miracle of manna, given in stress of famine, decayed by sunrise, but the Bread of Life eternal, in inexhaustible supply. Not *monopoly* but *wholeness*.

You will see at once that this gives the explanation of the dominating missionary impulse which drove the Church into the world to bring the whole world to Jesus Christ: to preach the Gospel to every creature. The missionary motive came from within, not from without. It was not primarily sympathy for human need: not the call from "the man of Macedonia." It was the will of God, now finally revealed and understood. God had revealed His whole counsel to His church, not for the Church's sake, but that the Church

in turn might declare it to the world. To fail in mission, therefore, was to deny the faith: to be recreant to trust: to fall under certain condemnation. "*Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.*"* As it was then, brethren, with St. Paul and the Apostolic Church, so it is now with us. Woe to us, if we preach not the Gospel. And for the self-same reason. To sum up then so far: not monopoly but wholeness: the whole counsel of God revealed in Jesus Christ: that takes us to the heart and soul of Christian faith.

II

Equally, it explains, and fully justifies the Church's devotion to her doctrine: the Church's tenacious hold upon her Creed. By way of illustration, take a physician at his work. It has two sides, two aspects. It is a science and an art. The doctor finds his science in the *materia medica:* in the text-books; in the accumulated knowledge of diseases and their cure: which was first put into his hands, and is now carried in his head. His art, on the other

* I Cor., x, 16.

hand, is the healing of the sick. And clearly his art is the main thing. His aim, his life-work, is not to gather and disseminate information about diseases and their cure. His aim is to save men out of sickness: to make and keep them well. His science is subordinate and secondary: it is only a means. It is not the end itself.

Yet he needs his science. He cannot do without it. However much he longs to be a healer, he cannot heal, unless he knows how to go about it. His science may be *only* a means but it is the *only* means. Where would the doctor be without his science?

Well, where would the Church be without its Creed? The cases are exactly parallel. The Church's ministers are commissioned to be physicians of the soul. And their work has its two sides. It is a science and an art. And with them, as with the doctors, their art is the main thing. Their real end and aim is, not to inform men about God, nor to instruct them in the Life of Christ, nor to give them right ideas of forgiveness, atonement, sacramental grace. Their real aim is to bring men to know God for themselves: to "beseech them, on

behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God": * to have their sins forgiven, and their souls refreshed and strengthened by the sacraments. Creed is less than character. Doctrine is subordinate to life. It cannot be put too strongly. One is the end. The other is but the means.

But it is the *only* means. Without a genuine spiritual science the Church, as physician of the soul, can have no standing, no excuse, no justification for its claim. Therefore the Church clings to the *materia medica;* to the approved authorities; to the consenting witness of the experts. Therefore the Church keeps tenacious hold upon the Creed.

Go back to the first days: go back to the Day of Pentecost itself. See the Apostles coming out into the streets, down from the Upper Room where the Lord had just poured on them the full light of His truth, and the full power of His grace. The crowds press on them, conscious of a crisis, eager for a sign, waiting an explanation. Then Peter speaks. And when he stops, the response to that first Christian sermon comes in the momentous question: "What shall we do? If this be true: if God

* II Cor., v, 20.

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is what you say and Jesus all you claim: how may we be included in the blessing? How may we too receive the gift? What shall we do?" Instantly, without pause or hesitation, Peter, speaking for the Church: or, rather, the Church speaking through Peter: gives the true answer, points the right way, prescribes the sure remedy: "Repent ye and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."* So the dogmatic system of the Church: its *materia medica:* its spiritual science: came into existence. There you have, in the form of plain unvarnished narrative, the origin, the justification, the necessity of the Church's Creed.

So it was born but not completed. There was more to come: more that had to come. As time went on, it was found that there was more which must be said in order that what was said might be quite clear. So, both while the Apostles lived and after they were dead, the Church amplified the Creed. And why should she not have done so? Surely it was as natural as it was necessary. The surprising

* Acts ii, 38.

thing is not the length but the shortness of the Creed as it finally took shape. Evidently there was a strong, constraining purpose to keep it short while at the same time including it in what was shown to be vitally essential. This severe restraint tells its own story. The real end of the Church's creedal statements is simply to *declare*, and to be so faithful in declaring that no man shall either lose his way, or come short of the "whole counsel of God" for his blessing and salvation.

"I shrank not from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." It is natural and right to put the words into the Church's mouth. And in the Church's mouth the words are true. There have been times of stress and strain: of sore trial and temptation. The Church, at one point has been weak and fallen into compromise: at another, it has been proud and arrogant, claiming over-much authority and knowledge: at still another, it has been dull and torpid, indifferent to present tasks and future visions.

But wherever the continuity of the Church's life has been preserved: wherever the Apostolic Word and Sacraments and Order have

held their place: there the Church has been true to its trust, has kept the faith, has not shrunk from declaring the whole counsel of its God.

Once more to sum up what I have been saying: *the whole counsel of God:* that gives the secret of the Church's faith, and the explanation of the Church's firm hold upon the Creed. The whole counsel of God is what the Church believes in, and lives by: and the Church is given over, in loyalty and love, to declare it to the world.

III

Where does all this lead? Why, it leads straight to the Episcopate. That is why the text is timely, because it helps us to understand what we are doing. We are here to add another Bishop to the great company: another link to the long line. What is a Bishop really for? What will this Bishop be about when we have consecrated him? It is easy enough to make a list of the various items which will fill up his time, and crowd the pages of his diary. He will be attending to, so far as it is given him, general diocesan affairs, especially

the welfare of the Clergy. He will be ordaining and confirming. He will be visiting the parishes and missions, as chief shepherd of the flock. He will be presiding at meetings great and small. No modern Bishop may escape their ceaseless round. He will be making addresses of all sorts and to all sorts. He will be dedicating buildings and many other things as well. He will be raising money, writing letters, and giving interviews. He will be all things to all men, and to all women too. Innumerable doors are open to him: innumerable calls are made upon him. His "activities," to use a distasteful modern word, would fill a book. All these activities have place. All are typical and characteristic, some much more rightly so than others. But none of them is primary. None of them gives the true meaning of Episcopacy.

What then are Bishops for? Why, Bishops are set in the Church to do what St. Paul says he gave his life in doing: to declare the whole counsel of God, and to declare it without shrinking.

Again, note carefully that the Bishops are to do this, not for themselves, but for the

Church. It is the whole Church: not any part of it, nor group in it: not even the whole House of Bishops: it is the whole body which has the mission, the duty, the responsibility. The truth and grace of Jesus Christ is a corporate possession. The Church is His representative, His agent, His trustee. The whole Church has the whole counsel to declare. But in declaring it, the Bishops are chief ministers or organs. They chiefly do it for the Church. The Church chiefly does it through them.

The Church and its ministers: the body and its organs. Let me dwell on the relationship. The organs of the human body: its eyes and ears for instance: belong wholly to the body. They have no life nor power of their own. Cut off from the body, they become quite dead and useless. It is the body which has the gifts of seeing and of hearing. It is the body which sees through eyes and hears through ears. Yet the body needs its organs. It cannot do without them. It cannot do anything without them. Of what use to the body are the gifts of sight and hearing unless the body has eyes and ears to see and hear with? Nor can the body get a second pair of eyes or ears if the

first pair should fail. Indeed some of the body's organs, ministers and servants though they be, are so vitally essential to the body that when they go, the body's very life goes with them. It is a paradox: this absolute dependence of the organs on the body and of the body on its organs. Yet it is a paradox of daily life: the most familiar fact of our existence. It is this paradox which finds its perfect illustration in the relationship between the Church and its official ministers.

"O priest, what art thou?
Thou art nothing, and yet everything.
Thou didst not make thyself, because thou art from nothing:
Thou are not for thyself, because all that thou doest is for God:
Thy life is not thine own, because thou art given to the Church as bondservant of all:
Thou art not thine own self, because thou art the minister of God.
What art thou, then? Nothing, yet everything, O priest." *

If that be true of Priests, it is yet more true of Bishops. For Bishops are the *chief* ministers. Therefore the principle, or truth, of ministry is chiefly seen in them: comes in them most clearly to the light.

Let me here speak by parable. The men

* A free translation from the Latin.

in charge of the reservoir which supplies a town with water are often out of sight and out of mind. Each member of each household in the town draws what he needs, for washing and for drinking. And perhaps, having in view the blessings which the water brings, in its sufficient and secure supply, he thanks the God Who gives it and those who have brought it to his home

Yet all the time, from day to day, those men, up in the hills, intent on securing the springs and sources: on watching the retaining walls: on purging out all alien matter: it is they who are chief servants both of the God Who gives, and of the multitude who use the water. Such are the Bishops. Nothing, yet everything.

How have the Bishops filled their office, and fulfilled their work? There was one traitor among the twelve Apostles. There have been others like him in the long course of the intervening centuries. How should there not have been? But the Church's reservoir *is* full: its walls are strong: its water pure. The humblest and the youngest member of the Church has offered to him, every power and every privilege which was given to the Church at

Pentecost. The whole counsel of God: the fullness of the grace and truth of Jesus Christ, is with us still.

And the Bishops of the Church have done it: or more truly, the Church has done it through the Bishops. Thank God, then, for the Bishops, yes, but, even more, pray for them continually. They need your prayers. Even St. Paul admits he felt the strain. He acknowledges a tendency to shrink even while he shrank not. I think every Bishop must be personally grateful to the Apostle, not only for what he said, but for the precise way in which he said it. I think every Bishop knows something at least of what the Apostle had in mind. Even St. Paul admits he felt like shrinking. Yet he shrank not. Please God we shall not shrink.

IV

My brother, here in Vermont there is noble Episcopal traditions. The Bishops of this Diocese have not shrunk from declaring the whole faith of the Church, the whole catholic Gospel of our Blessed Lord. And the Church in this country has become accustomed to look

to Vermont for the true interpretation of a Bishop's office.

Of the present Bishop, to whom you will now become Coadjutor, this is not the time or place to speak. Yet I cannot refrain from saying this: that my own Episcopate owes to him chiefly whatever it has had of true ideals, of loyalty and hope and courage. And there are many among the other Bishops and clergy of the Church who are daily giving thanks for his teaching and the example of his life. You are fortunate and blessed to have him as your spiritual guide and master as you take up your work.

Nor to yourself need I say much. I know your humble devotion to our Lord and to His Church: your pastoral instinct: your power of human touch and sympathy: your patience and good temper in difficulty and adversity: your readiness for sacrifice. These are to be your offering. They are quite insufficient in themselves, as you so keenly realize. But after our Lord has taken what you bring, and touched it, and transformed it, He will suffice you. He will enable you to bring forth fruit which shall abide.

May God by His Holy Spirit guard, guide and govern you. May He give you courage, wisdom, faith and zeal to fulfill His purpose and to do His will, to His own greater glory and the edification of His Church.

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